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The Black Cat

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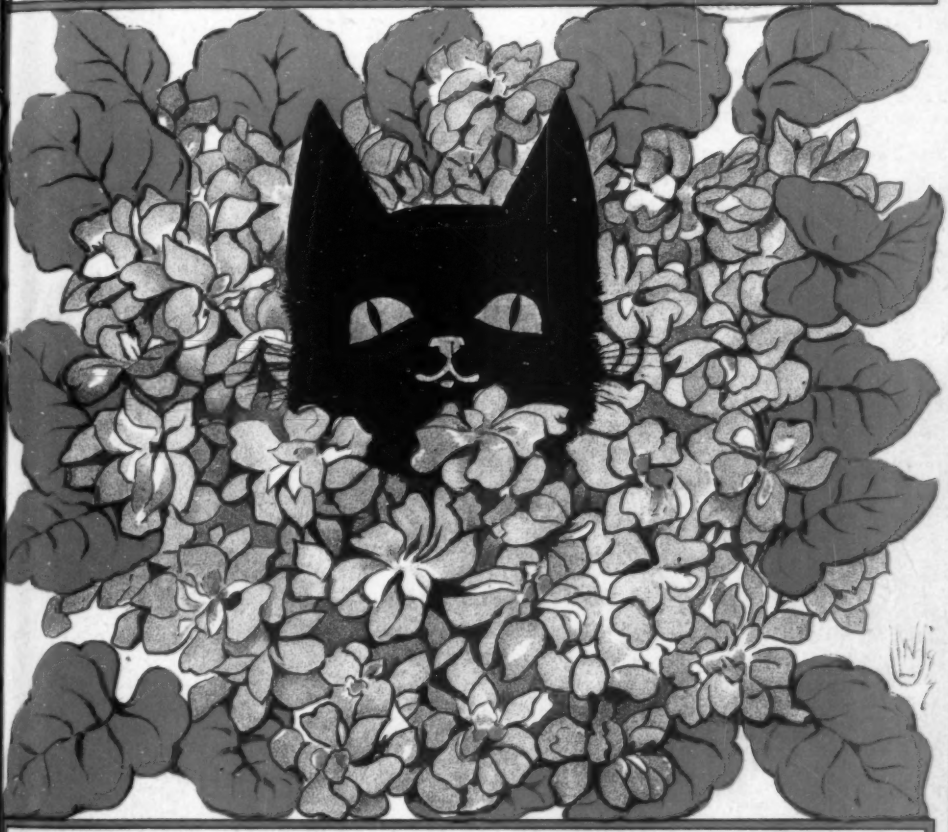

March 1898

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Holiday rhymes
That hold workaday reason

MONDAY **S** is for Sarah, so slight but so grand,

TUESDAY **A** is for Ada, first star in our land,

WEDNESDAY **P** for Paderewski, plays pianos for gold

THURSDAY **O** for Otero, the dancer so bold,

FRIDAY **L** stands for Lillian, America's pride

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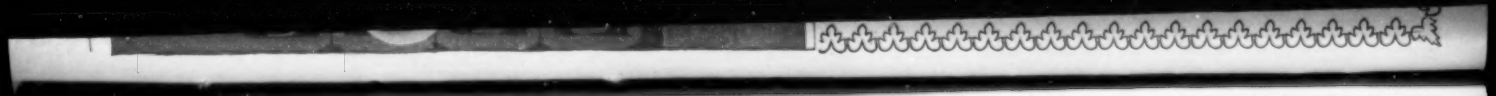

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Because they earned rest with SAPOLIO

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BRINGS REST ON SUNDAY

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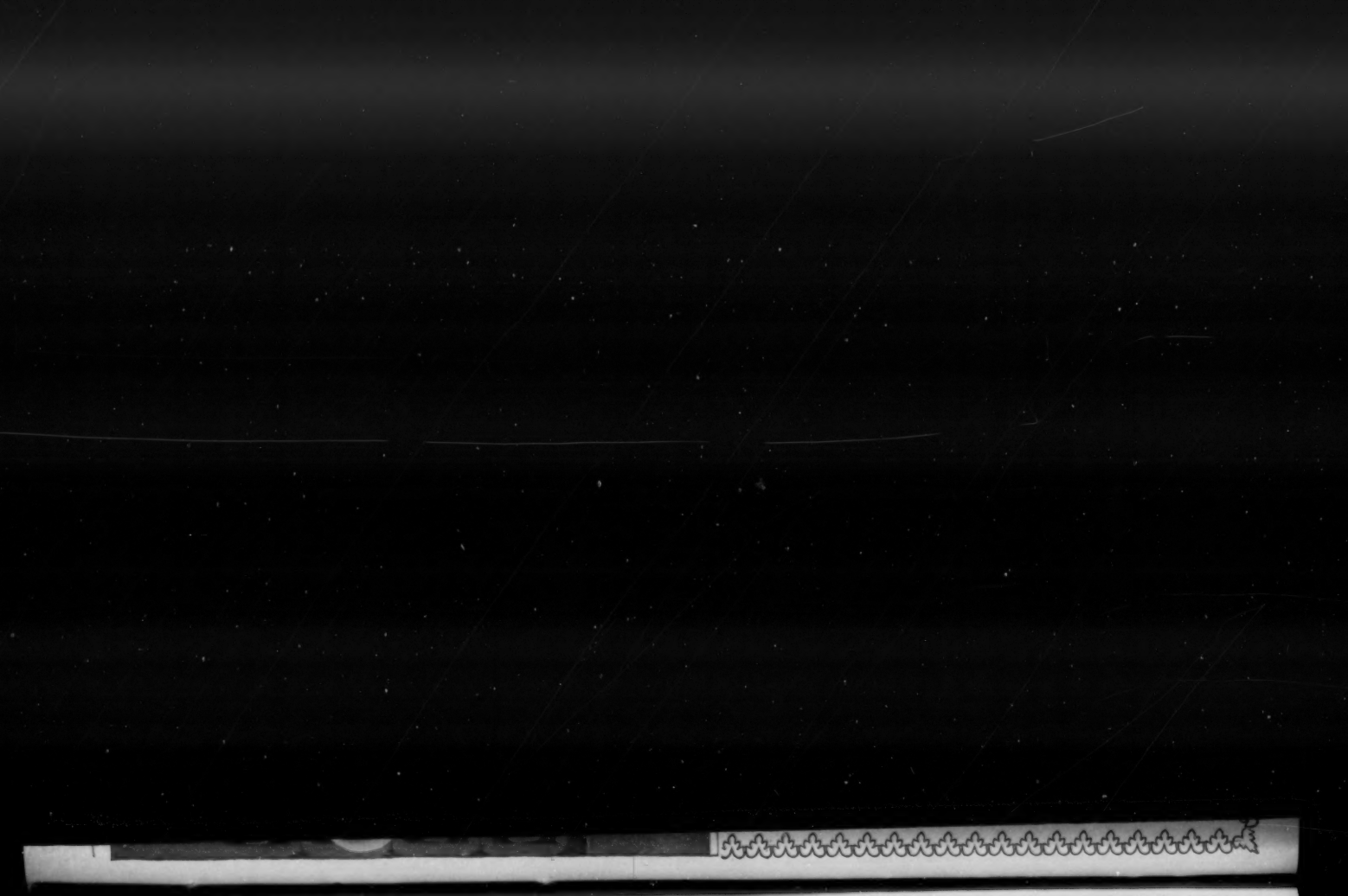
In workaday times.



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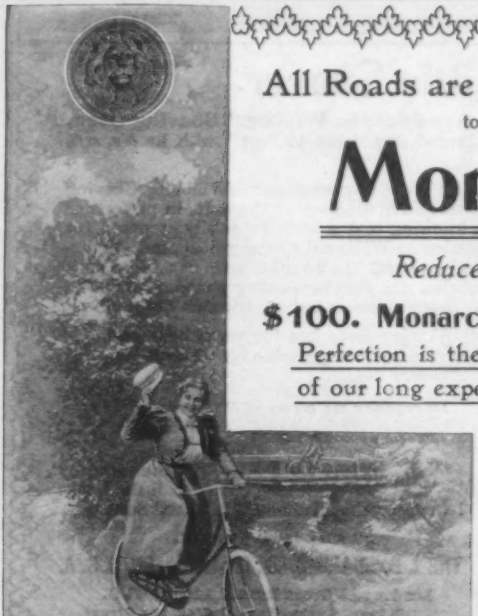

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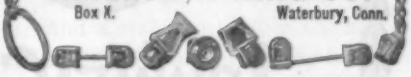

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The Black Cat

A Monthly Magazine of Original Short Stories.

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No. 30. MARCH, 1898. 5 cents a copy. 50 cents a year.

Entered at the Post-Office at Boston, Mass., as second-class matter.

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"The Heart of God."*

BY JOANNA E. WOOD.

THREE men sat in a handsome office-like room in a London house, around a mahogany table across which questions involving millions of money had been decided.

The oldest of the three was a short little man, with white hair and red face, of choleric habit, evidently, and having a due sense of his own importance, which had been very great in India, and was still greater in the monetary world, for he was Sir Lucius Lang, sometime an officer in her Majesty's Indian Service, and now known far and near as a financier. After having survived the fluctuations of the *rupee* for so many years, the vagaries of the stock market merely amused him.

Seated opposite to him was a tall spare man, a man, one would have said, who knew accurately the location of his liver; he had a hook nose — there is much virtue in a hook — of a certain kind, but Arthur Godwin's hook was not Semitic, but of the type which attained apotheosis as an adornment of the Iron Duke. Therefore it indicated ancestors rather than speculative acumen; nevertheless, Arthur Godwin's favorite recreation was to come up to London and indulge in financial flyers.

Birds of various feathers these flyers were, and rarely showed

*This story received the second prize of $500 in THE BLACK CAT $2,600 prize competition.

homing tendencies, but flew away into the blue and rose perspective of speculative distance, never to return.

The man sitting between Sir Lucius and Godwin was a great contrast to his companions.

He was young, and brown, and lean, with a sunburnt mustache and a square jaw; his eyes were gray and very keen, and his whole appearance was that of a man who had often played for big stakes against heavy odds. Thought and action were simultaneous with him, and there was so much alertness in his pose as to suggest that he had lived among people not above suspicion.

His name was Allan Trask, and he was an American, if any nationality can be rightly given to a man of such cosmopolitan experiences. He had mined gold in California and opals in Mexico; he had sought silver in Peru and dug for nuggets in Australia.

He had lived on horse meat at St. Etienne, when the ponies injured in the mines had been raised to the surface to be converted into beefsteaks; he had supped off grasshoppers in oil in Africa, and breakfasted off blubber amid the eternal snows, and rejoiced over kangaroo tail soup in New Zealand; — and when he found himself at a civilized table displayed discrimination in his drinking and ease in his deportment.

There had been a love story. Reversing national precedent, he had fallen in love with an English girl, and she with him; but there had been rumors, untrue but difficult to meet; his wild ways frightened her, and her people, spicing their tales of him with that devil's salt, a grain of truth, managed to prejudice her judgment (not her heart, for that never wavered), and so they parted. Perhaps Trask's pleading had not been very gentle; he thought of it sometimes and cursed himself for a brute, and entered into enterprises more and more hazardous, just to show the poor opinion he had of his own value.

But he came forth scathless from every danger, and the ache at his heart grew worse. Of all his exploits the last had been the most perilous, but he had succeeded, and the result was brilliant, literally, for it was represented by the magnificent diamond, worth a king's ransom, which lay like a lump of solidified fire upon the center of the table.

He had got it, no matter where, but at the cost of much money and the hourly risk of his life for weeks. Never before had this unsurpassable gem changed hands but at the price of many lives; dynasties had depended upon its possession; it had been the cause of wars, and conflagrations, and insurrections. Men and women had died mistaking its glitter, which dazzled their glazing eyes, for the gleams from the opening gates of paradise. Never before had European eyes beheld it, though the soldiers in India had heard of the glory of the "Heart of God," and many of them had marveled together over it, and wondered if the name was used figuratively, or if there was indeed in the possession of the priests a precious stone which merited the rhapsodies of the natives.

When Sir Lucius Lang left India he had brought with him an Indian servant named Tippoo, a child rescued from the sack of a temple of one of the occult faiths.

This child, gifted with all the subtlety and craft of the East, educated in the more practical, if coarser, ethics of the English, developed into a very handsome man, who, hung with rich Oriental stuffs in winter, or clad in snow-white linen in summer, acted as body servant to Sir Lucius.

He made curries and cooked rice with the art inherent in his race, and always stood behind Sir Lucius's chair at table. If Sir Lucius had occasion to punish Tippoo, he did so characteristically, for, after the regulation toast "to the army abroad" had been drunk, he would launch forth into a description of the Indian mutiny; and with a malignity which would have been fiendish, if it had not been so very justifiable, he described the treachery of the natives and the terrible punishments meted out to them. England's strong hand had fallen heavily in her righteous wrath, and Sir Lucius kept the memory of it alive in the heart of Tippoo, who, during the torture of these recitals, stood livid and trembling, enduring, it would seem, in his own proper person all the agony and humiliation meted out to his treacherous race. And after such an experience he would lie all night in a wide-eyed trance, for the vivid descriptions of Sir Lucius brought back to him with photographic accuracy the panorama of weird, terrible sights he had witnessed, crouched in the judgment hall of the sacred temple.

At first these memories were a meaningless phantasmagoria of horror to him, but as he grew older he began to decipher their import, and, remembering the gorgeousness of the temple, he began to calculate its worth; and whereas he had once trembled before these visions, he now sought them, and with his inherited power of mental concentration set himself to dive deeper and deeper into his childish memories. Thus he succeeded in unrolling the scroll of his experiences back to the very alphabet of his infantile impressions, and he studied their misty outlines till he could read clearly every symbol impressed upon the plastic tables of his memory. He could have told strange tales of the hatching of many devilish plans which ere long perfected themselves in deeds which appalled the whole civilized world; he could have told of the sowing of that fatal seed which bore a terrible blossom of blood and flame; he could have told who breathed forth that mysterious whisper, which, like the hissing of an unseen snake, ran all over India, bidding the brown people rise and slay; he could have told from whence came the strange cakes impressed with the mystic, omnipotent symbol, which were found one morning, three days before the mutiny, in every building wherein men dwelt in India, from the viceroy's palace to the fakir's hut. Mingled with these were other recollections — of priests filled with fanatic faith, who, ere they left their temple to kill and maim and torture, hid the treasure of their gods so cunningly that no mortal man could find it unaided; and piercing far, far back, he recalled how, with splendid procession and solemn promises of human oblations, they had taken the great Heart of God from the wooden statue which held it and hid it away. In the East the heart is supposed to be the genesis of thought, and these priests kept the Heart of God in a gilded wooden statue, to signify that the purposes of God are wrought through perishable mediums and perfected by poor mean mortals.

Tippoo remembered how, when the white unbelievers had visited the temple, they had passed by the wooden statue and gloated with greedy eyes over the gold and silver emblems in other niches; and he remembered, too, how the High Priest had gloomed after them, muttering to himself that the spirit of the true God did not dwell beneath the gay uniform of the English soldier, but beneath the

bare brown skin of the humble priests, even as the great diamond Heart of God was hidden beneath the humble wood.

And one day Tippoo sought audience of Sir Lucius, and standing humbly before him divulged to him the secret of the Heart of God, told him where it was hidden, and offered to supply a map of the location, and sighed with melancholy gentleness as he concluded, "The old gods were perhaps false, but their hearts were good, and such things are greatly prized here, and are of much price."

Price! Sir Lucius thought he knew better than Tippoo the price of diamonds.

Now, to any one unacquainted with India, this tale would have seemed incredible, but Sir Lucius knew the incalculable riches of the temples, and knew that whenever he wanted it, the most miserable fakir by the wayside could command untold treasures; Sir Lucius had heard of the Heart of God, and there was no doubt in his mind that Tippoo knew whereof he spoke.

But Sir Lucius knew, too, better than most, the watchful dragons of cunning which guard even the ruined temples. He knew the armed silent shadows which grow, it would seem, out of the barren rock to steal after the rash investigator. An Englishman disappears, the vultures hover even more thickly than usual above the courts of the ruined temple, the natives see them and smile.

Sir Lucius had "considered with himself," and the result was a communication to Arthur Godwin, which brought that gentleman to town in a hurry, and after several hours' talk across the mahogany table they decided to finance an expedition of one.

It would seem the great difficulty lay here — the man.

But Sir Lucius thought he knew him, he suggested Trask; it was a niece of Sir Lucius with whom Trask had fallen in love, and of all her relatives, the old "fighting uncle" had been the only sympathizer.

Decency made him sympathize sneakingly, Trask was so strikingly ineligible; but, as the old man said with a whole-souled oath, "he feared neither the face of man nor the horns of the devil." To which his sister, the girl's mother, remarked austerely that the young man seemed "equally free from the fear of God." Sir

Lucius opened his mouth, but remembering he was no longer a fire-eating soldier, but a peaceable land owner, closed it and grew purple in the face from repressed speech.

When the proposed search for the diamond was suggested to Trask he grasped at it eagerly.

What was life worth to him? Nothing.

So with as sad a heart as ever left England, Trask "set his foot on the ship, and sailed to the other side of the world."

And there he had faced death in every form. From plague, and fever, and starvation; from knife, and poison, and ambuscade; from thugs, and reptiles, and wild creatures; from pitfalls, enchantments, and women, he had escaped and brought back the Heart of God.

And there it lay upon the table, undoubtedly the finest diamond in the world. And Sir Lucius had told Trask that his niece Edith had not spoken to him for months, since she had found he had some part in sending Trask into danger; and Trask's lean face glowed with a greater joy than he had felt when, on the throbbing deck of the liner, he had pressed the diamond hard against his breast, and seen the Indian shore grow dim in the distance.

The diamond had been shown to Tippoo, and he was promised a rich reward; but he trembled, and said that, though the old gods might not be powerful any more, yet he would not further anger them by taking money for having betrayed their secrets; it was indeed a terrible thing to have done. "But," he added in Oriental phrase, looking at his master, "love is stronger than fear."

"It is," said Trask below his breath, and for a moment his eyes stung as if with salt water.

The discussion between the three men was now as to the best method of selling the diamond.

Its enormous size forbade any private sale, and they were in no mind to be dispossessed by the crown. It would have to be cut up. It was certainly a terrible shame — still — it meant millions. They could have it cut into many pieces, and yet each would be perfect, and greater than the greatest solitaires.

It was enough to make a man's head swim, certainly talking of it made their throats dry.

"We will have a glass of sherry," said Sir Lucius, and rang for Tippoo.

He gave the order, to which Trask supplemented a request for a glass of water.

"What!" said Sir Lucius. Trask reaffirmed his preference, and Tippoo departed.

"They said once I drank," he said, "though I never was drunk in my life! But since then I've never tasted a drop, just to give the girl an unanswerable argument — if she cares to use it."

Sir Lucius gave him a great slap on the back.

"Well, drink the water! But it's the last in my house! I've wired for Edith and her mother in terms they won't disregard; they'll be here to-night, and you will have some time alone with Edith — if you care to use it."

Trask reached out his hand and Sir Lucius wrung it, and when he relinquished it Godwin's palm was waiting. They shook hands across the diamond — the slanting sun rays smote it into flame, and Tippoo entered with the sherry decanter and two glasses, and a huge crystal goblet of water. The three men raised their glasses to their lips; the two sherry glasses were put empty on the table, Tippoo placed them on the tray. A moment after Trask put down the glass of water half full, Tippoo placed it on his tray beside the other glasses. Trask looked from one to the other of the two men and then suddenly cried: —

"Where's the diamond?"

It was gone.

Tippoo gave such a start that the water in the half-filled glass leaped up in a little silvery wave. Then with the impassivity of the Oriental he turned away. Arthur Godwin's face was livid, Sir Lucius's eyes were suffused with blood and his face was purple.

Trask's eyes glittered fiercely.

"Wait," thundered Sir Lucius to Tippoo; "stand where you are." And while the Eastern servant stood in his white draperies, holding the tray in hands that did not quiver, the three men sought the floor, the table, their own persons — but the diamond was gone.

"Strip!" said Sir Lucius briefly to Tippoo.

With a kind of proud humility Tippoo obeyed. Nor was his master content till he stood nude, slender and beautiful as a bronze Hermes before them.

Inch by inch Sir Lucius searched the linen draperies, and the gorgeous silk girdle, and the flat straw slippers, then threw them back with a brief: —

"I was wrong."

Tippoo cast his draperies about him.

"Does the Sahib will that I remain?" he asked, ineffable and touching reproach in his great eyes.

"No; go, Tippoo," said Sir Lucius kindly; a preeminently just man, he already regreted his suspicions.

With melancholy grace Tippoo picked up his tray and departed. He paused at the door.

"It is well that I should be punished by the Sahib's doubts. The great fathers are very angry. It is their vengeance upon me. They have taken back the Heart of God."

He closed the door and the three men looked at each other, and as they looked fear fell upon them — intangible fear of intangible things.

It was broad daylight; the sunlight streamed in at the window.

Trask had brought away the diamond from amid the most insidious dangers; it had been spirited away from beneath their very eyes. A blankness of mind fell upon them. They could not reason, for they had absolutely no hypothesis to go upon.

Suddenly Godwin rose. "I don't wish to be rude," he said, "but, frankly, Sir Lucius, I should be more comfortable out of here."

"I believe I should myself," said Sir Lucius.

Trask rose with them, but his face had grown very stern and set.

"Wait a moment," he said. "I risked my life fifty — no, a hundred times to get that diamond, and now by some infernal diablerie it is whisked away from beneath our very noses, from between our very fingers, from under our very eyes, but I'll find that diamond again if it is on earth. All the magic in hell won't guard it against me. I'll find where that diamond has gone if I have to beg, a fakir in a breech-clout, along the Indian waysides. If you could guess what I've been through! The effort to get it, the unspeakable horror of its surroundings, the mental torture of fear,— for I've known that agony,— the dread-

ful dangers of my return journey, the poisoned food, the benumbing smoke of deadly drugs creeping round me as I slept, and I've passed through these things to be bedeviled in broad daylight! It's intolerable!"

"My boy," said Sir Lucius kindly, "I had no real idea, after all, to what I was sending you. You will forgive me? Edith shall ask you, too, and I think she'll have something to say about the fakir idea. Though perhaps two can play at that game. But, seriously, it is Godwin and I who have failed in this scheme; and, after all, the speculation was not fair, for you hazarded life and limb, and Godwin and I only money, and when you brought the diamond back we failed to keep it. Come back to dinner, both of you, and don't worry over the thing. Edith will have plenty, and Godwin and I can scramble along. Eh, Godwin?"

"Yes, indeed," said Godwin heartily. "Yes, indeed."

Trask's face relaxed.

"Come back early; don't wait for the dinner hour. I say, *did* you ever know such a devilish strange thing?"

They stood for a quarter of an hour together, babbling like boys of their amazement, and then parted.

. . . . . .

Trask and Edith were definitely engaged.

Trask's face, which was so strong as to be almost brutal, quivered with tenderness as he bent above the girl whose love had been great enough to overcome her fear of his wild ways and stern face; and Edith knew that never again would he frighten her, for his second wooing was very gentle, and her timorous fingers nestled confidently in his strong, lean hand. Their engagement was not to be too long, but Edith's mother was determined to have it decently conventional; and often, as Trask strode away from his sweetheart, he felt a wicked wish within him that he could drop the old lady down a well or something, not with any desire to injure her, but merely, as he naively said to himself, to get her out of the way for a little while.

For he thought, with tender triumph, that if he held out his arms Edith would slip into them of her own accord, if she were let alone.

The intensity of his love had made his first wooing too stern;

now it had come about that this fire eater trembled at the touch of Edith's fragile hands; only sometimes in the midst of her tyrannies a sudden fright would reassert itself, and then his new-found gentleness exerted itself to reassure her.

But mingled with the glamour of his love dream there was always the stern resolve to find out the fate of the diamond.

Poor Tippoo had had a sad end.

From the day of the diamond's disappearance he had never been well. Afterwards the other servants said he had eaten nothing for days.

He grew thinner and thinner, an unnatural brilliancy dilated his eyes. He had fits of weeping over his master's doubt of him, and Sir Lucius reproached himself bitterly because of his hasty suspicion, and finally Tippoo began to ramble and grow incoherent in his speech, and one night he disappeared and could not be found. He had seemed greatly disturbed that day, muttering incessantly to himself, and declaring to the other servants that his gods and the great fathers were angry at him and were punishing him, and that he was not fit to live. These things were, of course, quite unintelligible to the servants, but Sir Lucius put upon them an interpretation which wrung his generous old heart.

He repeated them to Trask and Godwin, and all three decided that doubtless Tippoo had made away with himself.

Sir Lucius clung to the idea that he might have wandered off while he was not himself, and advertised far and near for any clue. The advertisement was widely spread, and attracted the attention of a rich East Indian student at Cambridge, who, after inquiring particulars from Sir Lucius, supplemented that gentleman's reward by a very liberal one; but poor Tippoo was never heard of. Meantime, Trask studied occultism with the devotion of a *Cheelah*, he found out every devotee in England, he trailed London from one end to the other in pursuit of promises of enlightenment, he consorted with greasy workers of miracles and frowzy mediums, and hobnobbed with fashionable and learned Theosophists; he sought out stray East Indians, and by guile and gold gained entrance to a cleverly contrived shrine where Buddha was adored in the heart of London as in the Eastern jungles; he read deeply, and spent his substance upon rare books of occult lore; he

became an adept in magic white and black, and knew cabalistic words terrible to utter, but none of his cunning enabled him to find the whereabouts of the diamond, or to account for its disappearance.

It is said that one who has ever dealt in diamonds can never free himself from their fascination; and after Trask's romantic association with what was undoubtedly the finest diamond ever brought to England, it is not surprising that his interest was sustained in the precious gems, and that he came little by little to know most of the prominent diamond men in the country. Thus it was that he found himself a guest at a great banquet given by and for diamond men. And very well he was entertained, though the continual talk about diamonds served to make the cogent subject of his unending search unpleasantly prominent in his thoughts. Just as he was slipping into a reverie he was brought out of it by an even heartier laugh than usual, and came back to the scene about him to find that a genial old man who had won wealth from the blue clay at Kimberley was telling stories.

"You needn't laugh," he was saying, "it's quite true! There was Hodgins at Kimberley; he built a house and plastered it outside with rough cast made from the mine waste, and after the rains washed the house it glittered in the sun as if it was frosted, and they picked out hundreds of pounds' worth of diamonds. It was that which led to the present system of searching. Those were great days! Once I went up country to the upper mines and came back minus all my kit but my shirt and trousers, but with half a pocketful of stones; for the excitement ran so high that they wouldn't leave the mines for anything, and clothes were not to be had for love or money. I got a regular sparkler for my watch. That was the time to live — but living was high, too, a guinea a bottle for Belfast ale! I remember Hodgins showing me the great 'Up-country diamond.' That was a gem like a gem! Why, Hodgins dropped it into a glass of water and it was so pure and flawless that you could not see it. It was as transparent as the water, and you'd never dream it was there; it made me perfectly nervous, it was so strange to see it disappear so utterly. A game of 'now you see it and now you don't' played with a diamond worth thousands and thousands of pounds."

Trask heard no more, for the long table with its brilliant lights and flowers, with its many guests and numerous attendants, faded from before his eyes; instead of the great banquet room he saw the little office-like room in Sir Lucius Lang's house; instead of the banquet board he saw the little mahogany table; instead of the long line of jolly men he saw the white face of Arthur Godwin, the purpling countenance of Sir Lucius, he saw this visionary scene in detail, and noted the little wave leap up in the crystal goblet which the gentle Tippoo held.

How simply he had duped them!

Palmed the gem, and dropped it into the water before their very eyes! No wonder he had been so willing to be searched.

This was the occult phenomenon which had so bewildered them. He remembered the symptoms of Tippoo's illness, and his disappearance, and could hardly conceal his wrath.

. . . . . .

The next morning but one Sir Lucius Lang, Arthur Godwin, and Allan Trask met again round the little mahogany table, but the terror of mysterious forces no longer made them uneasy; instead, impotent rage knit their brows.

"To think," groaned Trask, "that you two furnished the money, and I risked my life to bring that diamond within the reach of that brown beggar!"

Old Sir Lucius nearly foamed at the mouth when he remembered how he had reproached himself for his suspicions of the innocent Tippoo.

Arthur Godwin did not rage, but he had made one or two very lucky speculations, and he intimated that his check book was at Trask's disposal if he would look up Tippoo.

. . . . . .

Trask and Edith had been married five years, and they were the greatest chums in the world, — real comrades, going everywhere, doing everything, together; they had run over to Paris for Easter, and it seemed to them that the beautiful city, having put off the sackcloth and ashes of her Lenten penances, was more gay than ever before. They had been looking at the treasures of the *Rue de la Paix*, for they both had a liking for shop windows, and no windows are so enthralling as the jewelers'; and as they walked

along the Boulevard they were attracted by the long line of people waiting to take their turn in entering to view the wonders of the "Cinemetagraphe," that wonderful development of the kinetoscope, which projects life-size figures upon a screen in such a manner that the real scene and events proceed before the eyes with every movement and gesture true to life. They saw the babies playing by the sea, they saw the blacksmith shoeing a horse, they saw the mischievous gardener turning his hose upon his friend, and then they saw the arrival of a train. They first saw the track stretching in two black lines, then the engine appeared, growing greater and greater till it passed out of sight, and the train halted, and then they saw the passengers descend. One of the first stepped from a first-class carriage, followed by a man who carried his rugs and hat box. He walked straight towards them along the platform till he was in the foreground of the scene; suddenly the changing picture was a blank; then another picture began, but neither Trask nor his wife saw it, for they had clasped each other's hands in strange excitement. They looked at each other.

"Are you sure?" asked Trask.

"Perfectly," said Edith. "It was Tippoo."

For the man they had seen in the changing picture was Tippoo, but dressed in the regular traveling tweeds of an Englishman, and escorted by his valet. With much difficulty, Trask found that the photograph had been taken as a London train arrived at Folkestone to meet the Paris boat, some few months before.

Trask went back to England, and struggled to find some clue, but in vain; and old Sir Lucius raved afresh when he heard the story; in fact, the loss of the diamond itself had not enraged him so much as the idea that Tippoo had a valet.

A few months later Sir Lucius received a letter postmarked India. It was very polite.

My dear Sir Lucius:—I am about to give you the information for which you offered a reward of five hundred pounds some six years ago, but as your enterprise in sending to India for the Heart of God for me has made me very comfortable for life, I will not expect you to pay the five hundred pounds; I would advise you to apply it to the promulgation of intelligence among retired army officers, country gentlemen, and young adventurers. I dropped the Heart of God into the goblet of water I was holding, and it was very funny to see you looking for it when it was so near you. It is a great mistake to think

we Eastern people have no sense of humor; I enjoyed this joke much better than you ever will. After leaving your house, I went to Cambridge, having quite sufficient money to establish me creditably at the University. I had ways and means of getting credit upon the Heart of God, which I need not explain. I amused myself much at Cambridge, and spent my vacations in Paris. (You don't go to the best hotels there, or I would surely have run across you.) As I say, I amused myself well in Cambridge, but I found nothing more entertaining than your replies to my letters of inquiry about myself. I was rather more liberal than you in my offers of reward. Still it is only fair to admit that I was hazarding my money on a sure thing. I have, as you see, returned to India, and am enjoying myself hugely; perfecting myself in the mystic lore of my race, and applying some of my university learning to its problems. I am a king in riches, a prince of pleasure, and I am greatly pleased to send you this intelligence of your Tippoo. Should you, or Arthur Godwin, or Tr. ĸ the heroic, ever care to come to India, depend upon it, you would be well entertained and your time fully occupied. In what school could an Oriental better learn to entertain the stranger within his gates than in such a household as yours? *I remember some of your dinners.* You need send me no word of your coming, for you will be welcome whenever and wherever you set foot upon Indian soil. My people know you well and wait for you, for I have sent them messages concerning you, and they were signed thus —"

Here followed a cabalistic symbol which made Sir Lucius shudder even in England, for it was the same dread hieroglyphic which had been imprinted upon the little ubiquitous cakes which told the brown people to unleash the tigers of the mutiny.

Sir Lucius Lang is a lion-hearted old man, and Trask needs no credentials of courage; but neither of them will ever tempt the tender mercies of the people of the Heart of God.

Across the Range.

BY KATE WOODBRIDGE MICHAELIS.

AM an American girl, married to an Englishman. He didn't marry me for money, because I hadn't a red cent; and I didn't marry him for title, because he hasn't one and never will have.

I never meant to marry a foreigner; my sister was an army woman, and I intended to "follow the drum," too. Guard mount was delightful, "hops" still better, and being quarreled about, best of all.

But Lucian came, saw, and conquered. He didn't dance, he didn't flirt, he talked little and studied much. After six weeks of dancing, flirting, and love-making men, a girl welcomes something else as a change. When Lucian told me that he had been sent out by the Royal Society to do some important work for them, when he stayed at home and made calculations while everybody else was having a good time, I was fascinated.

He was the only man I ever saw who I thought was too good for me, and I was proud and happy when he asked me to be his wife. It disturbed me a little that he didn't seem to know how to make love, but after we were married and he took me to my new home, I found that he did!

Lucian's mother is dead, but he has five unmarried brothers, a darling old aunt, and the dearest father in the world; as the one girl in the family, I have been absolutely spoiled ever since I became a member of it. The girls at home had pitied me because, as they said, American women have so much admiration, and then when they get to England have to take back seats, and they assured me I would find a great difference. I did; in America I had a front seat, in England I have a throne.

We had been married over a year when Lucian came in one day and sat down on the arm of my chair — there is a point, my sister sits on the arm of her husband's chair.

"Nelly," he said, in his sweet, deep voice, "would you come and live with me on an island that is almost a desert?"

I screwed up my mouth and considered. I might have said that it would be bliss to live with him on an island that was altogether a desert, but only one member of the family says such things, and I prefer listening to speaking.

"That depends," I said slowly; "why should we desert dad, and aunty, and the boys, and be Robinson Crusoes? Is there any real reason for it?"

"Yes."

"All right," said I; "what sort of a traveling dress do you suppose savages like, and what may your island call itself?"

"The savages must be exceedingly savage not to like any dress you wear, and the island calls itself Carruthers Land." (It doesn't, you know, but that is immaterial.)

"But why are we going?"

"They want me to go and get things ready for the Scientific Commission that is to go out in about six months to determine Solar G., and I'm going to take a chronometer to be acclimated."

Now I know little of those sublimated timepieces called chronometers, and less of the process by which, as I have since learned, their mechanism is so adjusted to a given climate as to register time accurately up to the fractional part of a second. As to Solar G., that was quite undreamed of in my philosophy. But I steered clear of such shoals by asking if our stay would probably last until the whole alphabet was determined, and so the matter was settled.

There was weeping and wailing when we broke the news to the family, and father wanted to keep me, but I only laughed at him for supposing I'd stay behind.

"It isn't Lucian, oh, dear, no," I explained; "it's just the fascinating savages, I do long to —"

"Turn their woolly heads," finished one of my brothers; he's very frivolous.

Never travel with an unacclimated chronometer if you value your peace of mind; it's too fatiguing. I once went with my sister, her three children, all under four years, and a sick maid, from New York to San Francisco and up to Portland by boat, and we

didn't work as hard as poor Lucian did going out to Carruthers Land on the steamer.

When the ship pitched Lucian guarded the chronometer; when the ship rolled Lucian guarded the chronometer; when the ship did neither Lucian guarded the chronometer. I might just as well have been traveling alone, for all the comfort I got out of my husband.

It had to be wound at just such a minute, it had to be swung in just such a way, and when it seemed likely to be seasick Lucian was on the verge of insanity. And whether it was jealousy or selfishness on my part, or whether I fancied neglect on my husband's, I don't know; but while I loved my husband I hated his chronometer as I've never hated anything before or since. And I not only hated it, but avoided every opportunity of making its acquaintance.

When we got to our desert island it was lovely, birds singing, flowers blooming, the sun shining mercilessly. A brown, handsome young Englishman was waiting to shake us by the hand when we landed, with an air of having parted from us last week, though he and Lucian, chums half their lives, hadn't met for ten years. Then there was a pale young American who fell upon our necks almost in tears; he had never seen us before. We forgave him his emotion, though, for he had been there less than five months, had achieved three attacks of fever, and been threatened with nervous prostration.

Lucian set to work at once to build piers, and stations, and huts for the Commission. Scientists all over the habitable globe were preparing to come to us, mooning over that dreadful Solar G. I lived in a bamboo house, built all on one floor, as, Richard Harding Davis to the contrary, notwithstanding, all real bamboo houses are; but what was good enough for me was unworthy that beast of a chronometer; so big stones were begged, borrowed, and stolen (from other islands), sunk in deep-dug foundations, and a palace erected for his Satanic Majesty, King Chronometer! I knew what it was like on the outside, but in spite of Lucian's repeated coaxings, I had never gone inside the door — indeed, I had never really seen my hated rival.

Our desert island was not a desert as concerned people; there

were on it a hundred or more Frenchmen, Englishmen, Americans, and Germans, a greater number of half and quarter breeds, and several thousands of natives, varying in shade from Spanish topaz to jet. A backbone of high hills led through the island, and on one side of that range lay our harbor, a mile or so away, land-locked, pretty, and placid, lying in the sunshine like a lady's mirror set in emeralds. On the other side was the Sea Station at the native settlement, and among the hills between, the Hill Station. At these two points the simultaneous observations were to be made if the Commission ever came, an event of which I grew more and more uncertain as month succeeded month with no sign of them.

At first I was patient enough — when I could forget the chronometer — but as it came near a year, I lost my appetite and my sleep, and was haunted by a fear that something was sure to happen to that diabolical thing before it got out of Lucian's hands. And I had plenty of time for such misgivings. I was practically a prisoner by daylight, for it was hard to get an escort, unsafe to cross the range without one, and I hated the very sight of a boat.

When at last came the news that the Commission had started, would arrive in a week, and after their work was finished would take Lucian and me home with them, I refused to credit the news until I should set foot on the homeward-bound ship. Lucian was away most of the time, going back and forth, making final arrangements, and I wandered about like a lost soul in heat such as I had never dreamed of. One afternoon, after spending an hour or so in the bath, I had just succeeded in falling asleep when I was awakened by the touch of Lucian's lips on mine, and started up to find him bending over me.

"I was a selfish brute to disturb you," he was saying, "but I couldn't go without a good-by."

"Go? Where?" I asked, only half awake.

"Across the harbor. I won't be back until Wednesday night, then I'll bring all the old fellows over to dinner. Lie down and go to sleep again."

And indeed I had already slipped back into my pillows, and was listening as in a dream to Lucian's footsteps as he crossed the room, when his voice at the door sent me bolt upright.

"Oh, I say, don't forget to wind the chronometer early Wednesday morning."

"Wind the chronometer!" For a moment the words meant nothing but a nightmarish weight on my yet half-awakened mind. The next I understood; I was on my feet and at the door. "Lucian," I cried frantically. But already he was far down the beach, whistling as he ran, and paying no attention to my cries. "Lucian," I repeated weakly, vainly; for now he had jumped into the boat, and the crew was rowing him away. And still I stood at the doorway, dazed, bewildered. Was Lucian insane? Wind the chronometer! I, who had never seen the chronometer — never invaded its sanctity — did not know whether it was wound with stem or key!

Thrusting my bare feet into slippers, I ran across to the Palace, opened the door with a fumbling hand and peered in. All that I could see was the long folds of a curtain, probably protecting the chronometer from profane eyes. Stealing carefully across the floor, I stretched out my hand toward the enveloping curtain. Then remembering the delicate mechanism there concealed, I drew away again, and hurried, panic stricken, back to the house. Lucian had said "early Wednesday morning." There was no need to tempt fate before then.

As a girl of fifteen I once spent a night alone with a croupy baby. But though that was my first experience with an infant at close range, the weight of responsibility didn't compare with that which grew upon me with every hour of the two days that followed. Did I try to sew? The stitches seemed to time themselves to the ticking of that incubus in the Palace. If I read, it was to find all the sentences running into one, "Wind the chronometer." Eating became a farce, sleeping the name of a custom long forgotten. And all the time my mind was straining vainly to bring out from some recess of my memory a word, a clue to guide me in my approaching ordeal.

A single hour of the hundreds I'd given to planning for books, music, gowns, to banish that kill-joy chronometer from Lucian's mind at times when he was off duty,— half an hour, ten minutes even,— might have made me for this once its master. And here was I its abject slave, alone, without any advisers except Henson,

my husband's kindly but ignorant old nurse, and a native servant. And as the latter couldn't swim, and our boat was gone, to send for Lucian was out of the question.

By Tuesday night I was so worn with the past two days' anxieties that I consented to stretch myself on my couch chair and rest. "Early Wednesday morning," Lucian had said. That meant probably not later than seven. Meantime the night was cooler, and a sense of peace stole over me. I slept fitfully, dreaming of home and repose. Once I roused to count the strokes of the clock — three ; that meant there were still four hours of respite. I drew a long breath of the sweet night air, and lay back, intending to keep watch until morning. But the stupor of exhaustion stole over me, and I slept again. When I awoke it was to broad sunshine and hot wind. It was nine o'clock!

Half frenzied, I sprang up, flung a wrap over me, and ran barefooted to the Palace. Clutching frantically at the curtain, I snatched it away, almost tearing it from its fastenings. And then, for the first time in all those months, I saw the instrument around which centered my husband's whole career. There it stood, calm, remote. With a sudden fear, I bent low and strained my ears to listen.

The chronometer had stopped!

For a moment that seemed months long I stood there, seeing as in a vision the expedition a failure, the toil of three years wasted, Lucian's charge brought to naught. And I was the culprit! I, the one person in the world who should have held up his hands —

With the swiftness of a wave a thought suddenly swept upon me, carrying me to the house almost without my will. At the Hill Station, under the charge of Lucian's friend, Courtenay Day, was another chronometer, one only half acclimated, to be sure, but still to me a chronometer. To the Hill Station I would hasten with ours — as I thought I was hurrying into my riding habit — I would ask Courtenay Day to wind and set it, and would bring it back before the misfortune was discovered. Then, of course, I would tell Lucian. Of the morality of the affair, the falsifying of records implied, my half-dazed mind made no more account than it did of the dangers of a ride that few men even dared ven-

ture on alone. The protests of Henson, when she took away the remains of my hardly touched breakfast, the broken remonstrances of Gobbo, the native servant, as he helped me mount the mule I had ordered saddled, sounded far away as the buzzing of flies.

That I was going to the Hill Station, that I was taking the chronometer — entrusted to Henson with infinite fears even for the moment of my mounting — was all that I would explain. Then trembling with an inward ague, but outwardly calm, I lifted the precious instrument from its harness with my left hand, gathered the reins with my right, and rode away.

Rode through rank tropic forests astir with strange noises, up scantily wooded slopes, out finally into a road glaring white in the equatorial sun — scenes to me alike as unreal as the painted scenery of a theater — rode finally with set teeth, and arm swollen, throbbing with its burden, but still rigidly extended. Rode as one rides for life — and more than life.

It was twenty minutes of ten when I left the house; it was after one when I reached the Hill Station. As I turned the bend that brought the house in sight, the aspect of the place struck me like a blow. Dropping my reins, I leaned forward, my eyes shaded. No, there could be no mistake. The door was shut, the heavy padlock hung from its hasp, the iron window shutters were closed and barred!

At that the stern tension of the morning suddenly snapped. Like a child I screamed, I sobbed; leaning from my saddle, I beat upon the barred door with my bare right hand till the knuckles bled. Then, as voice and strength ebbed, a terror of the silence smote me, and I turned my mule's head and rode away.

Where? I did not know, only to some one who could assist me in my fearful predicament. Before me the road stretched white and threatening. Panic stricken, I plunged into a forest path — only to find myself assailed by new fears — fear of the strange sounds and odors of the tropic jungle, of beasts whose stealthy movements I seemed to hear on every side, fears that finally communicated themselves even to my usually stolid mule, who quivered and snorted, and started at every sound.

And all the while in my almost paralyzed hand the chronometer lay like a ball of ice, the chill from it mounting slowly, slowly

to my head, creeping down to my heart, until at a sudden plunge of my mule shying from a swaying vine, I was thrown forward into what seemed a bottomless abyss.

When I opened my eyes there were lights flashing about me and my head was on Lucian's breast, while many figures were standing about us.

"Oh," I cried in agony, as his hand pressed my arm; then, remembering everything, "Lucian," I moaned, "I let it run down, I — have spoiled it all."

"My poor foolish child," he said softly, as I hid my face against him, "did you suppose that I would leave the chronometer in the keeping of my wife — my wife who knew nothing about it — wouldn't interest herself in her husband's work?

"Why, that thing you have in your hand — let me take it, dear — is an old affair Courtenay put in the stand because he said it looked lonely without anything. It was broken two years ago. It couldn't be wound. I was so glad and happy to be done with my charge that I called to you, just in fun, knowing that you had never been in the chronometer house, and supposing that nothing would persuade you to go there. The real chronometer was in the boat, just going to the Sea Station when you looked after me. Couldn't you tell that that old thing was broken?"

"Lucian," I said solemnly, raising my eyes to his, "I've been an idiot!"

And so I was. But I've changed all that; I take some sort of interest in what interests my husband now, and the next time we go off on a chronometer expedition, the chronometer and I will be such excellent friends from start to finish that my husband will be the one who is jealous.

The Block of Bronze.

BY HERBERT W. CROTZER.

"SO you good people thought I gave you 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth,' did you?"

"Well, yes," I replied; "we all noticed how your story coincided with what has been published concerning your operations, and we were especially struck with the way you seemed to cover all the details of the job; how anxious, in fact, you appeared to be to leave out no point or circumstance that would throw light on your subject."

"Just so," said my friend; "I noticed that you all seemed to take it in as gospel truth, but the fact is, Frank, the most remarkable thing that happened over there was omitted from my yarn altogether."

I gazed at the speaker in astonishment, but he pulled away at his disreputable old pipe as unconcernedly as if he had said the most natural thing in the world.

Edward Van Zant, the explorer, was my lifelong friend, college chum, and now my honored guest.

At college, Ned went in for dead and hidden things, archæology, and all that; and, after absorbing all that the best schools of this and other countries could teach on those lines, he started in, digging here, prodding there, until he had punctured holes in the earth's crust in pretty much every country on the globe.

Now, after ten years of this sort of thing, he was back in his native city, with a hat full of medals and decorations, and his fame as an explorer and archæologist established throughout civilization.

We had just returned from a dinner given in his honor by a local scientific body, and had adjourned to the library for a smoke and a chat before retiring.

Our talk, so far, had referred to his little speech concerning his latest most important discoveries in Egypt, and to the effect it had produced upon his hearers.

That he should now acknowledge having intentionally omitted facts of importance bearing upon his work was, to put it mildly, an eye-opener, and I could only look the astonishment I felt.

After a few thoughtful puffs, Ned said: "Frank, what really did happen is so strange, so inconceivable, that were I to tell the story to the world, it would laugh at me, say I lied, or was crazy."

"See here," he exclaimed, throwing off coat and collar, and uncovering the upper portion of his brawny chest and shoulders; "here's a bit of evidence of the truth of my tale, that I always carry with me."

I looked, and on his throat, underneath the heavy beard, I beheld a lot of scars which, extending downward, spread out into rows that covered every inch almost of the body exposed to view. It looked as if some sharp-toothed instrument, like a rake, had gouged out the flesh, or as though the man had been seared by hot irons.

"Good heavens!" I cried. "What beast or thing did that?"

"Aye, you may well put it that way," replied Ned, resuming his garments and seat; "it was a Thing, the most horrible God ever allowed on His footstool.

"I told you this evening," he went on, "that I had set out to investigate a small pyramid which stood in the desert, a mile or two from the oasis that had been my base of operations while exploring in that part of Egypt. I explained how we spent weeks digging and sounding before success rewarded us; how we finally broke into the tomb underneath the pyramid, and discovered the mummies and the stores of jewels and ornaments, which proved that the bodies had lain there, undisturbed by mortal hand, since the days they were buried — six thousand years before. All these things occurred precisely as I stated. There was nothing here to conceal.

"You also heard of the attempt made to steal some of our treasures from the building in which they were temporarily stored; how one of my men on guard at the time was murdered,

and how I, while seeking traces of the murderer in the camp of a band of roving Arabs, was attacked in the tent of the sheik, and forced to kill that individual to save my own life. That part of the story was true enough, so far as it went, but the most important facts were omitted. What actually did occur was this: —

"After working for weeks on the job, and gaining nothing but hard labor for our pains, I got discouraged, and one evening I announced to the men that if the next day or two brought no better luck, I would abandon the undertaking. I also told them that, in order to be in good trim for what might be our last attempt, they should do no work next day, and suggested that they should go to headquarters at once and take a rest. They were glad enough to get a holiday, after working as they had done, and soon all hands were on their way to the oasis, where my party, with the exception of the native laborers, put up when off duty.

"I remained in camp, and early next morning made a tour of the diggings. I examined every hole and sounding, made careful measurements, and tried to think out some new plan of operation that would yield tangible results. Finally, I returned to my tent and was about to seat myself in front of it, when I happened to see far out on the desert what my field-glass showed me was a caravan. It was a small affair — a dozen camels, loaded, and as many horsemen. It was headed for the oasis, and would come no nearer to the pyramid.

"As I stood watching the travelers, a horseman, riding ahead, left the column, and followed closely by what seemed, at that distance, a child, also mounted, rode rapidly towards me, the rest continuing on their way. When they got within several rods of me the pair pulled up, and the man, dismounting, stood quietly while his little companion proceeded to the pyramid and passed behind it, out of sight, followed by the riderless horse. Then the stranger walked forward until but a few yards separated us, when he stopped, and, instead of the usual salaam, made a profound bow. He uttered not a word, but stood with arms folded, as if waiting for me to address him. He was very tall, straight as a spear, and wore the ordinary long white garment of the desert tribes.

"Irritated by the man's silence, I finally cried out, in Arabic, 'Who are you, and what do you want?'

"At this, my visitor came up close to me, replying as he did so, 'Who I am matters little; what I want you will give me in return for services I shall render you.'

"I was astonished, as you may well suppose, but ere I could speak, he continued: 'I know you are Edward Van Zant, the explorer. I know what you expect to find here, and how you have worked, without avail, until you have become discouraged. How I know these things concerns me alone. What concerns you is the fact that I, and I alone, can show you how to enter the tomb, which is here, as you surmise, and I will do so, provided you give me my choice of what you may find in it.'

"Although amazed at the man's knowledge of me and my movements, and distrusting him instinctively, I determined to force his hand, if possible, and find out his demands and what he proposed to do.

"Inviting him to sit down on a block of stone at my side, I said, 'You seem to know so much, and to be so powerful, why haven't you opened this tomb yourself?'

"'Because,' he replied, 'to do so requires engineering skill and mechanical appliances, which it is impossible for me to obtain hereabouts.'

"'What do you require in payment for your services?' was my next query.

"'A mummy,' he replied.

"'A mummy!' I exclaimed; 'why, these are the things I am most anxious to find myself, and you may demand what is of the greatest value to me.'

"'Listen,' said the man; 'you will find bodies of kings and queens who lived at a time of which man has no record. These shall be yours, together with all the jewels and ornaments buried with them. You will also discover a case in which is the body of a dwarf, an insignificant thing compared with the other treasures. This case and contents are all I ask, and I swear there is nothing in them that would be of value to you. As a guarantee that I am not trifling or trying to deceive you, take these;' saying which, he drew out a small pouch, from which he poured into my hands a

dozen or more of the finest diamonds I ever saw. 'If I fail you in any way,' he continued, 'or you do not find everything as I say, these shall be yours.'

"To be brief, I agreed to the proposal, the Arab accepting my verbal promise to live up to the contract.

"'Now,' said he, when the preliminaries were settled — and here is where the incomprehensible part of the affair begins — 'I will fulfill my part of the agreement.'

"With this he gave a shrill whistle, following upon which the little fellow came out from behind the pyramid, and, with the other horse by his side, rode up to us and dismounted. Making a low bow to me, he stepped in front of the other and gazed, without a word, into his face, as if awaiting a command.

"I now saw that, instead of being a child, the newcomer was a dwarf, twenty years old, or thereabouts. He was a handsome, dark-eyed little fellow, with a red fez and zouave-like outfit that became him well. That he was uncommonly active and powerful, I had reason to thank my stars later on.

"At a word, in some strange dialect, the dwarf detached from the Arab's saddle and handed him a scimitar, the hilt and scabbard of which were covered with some scaly material that I afterward found to be the skin of a snake.

"Another word or two, in the same unknown tongue, and the little man drew back and faced the big one. As he did so, I caught a look of aversion on his face, and his eyes gleamed as if with hatred or defiance. The Arab noticed the look and returned it with an ugly scowl and a growl that sounded like a threat.

"Arising from his seat, he unsheathed the blade, and the next moment the dwarf seemed to be standing in the midst of a rain of fire. The Arab was laying about him with the weapon, and such sword play, I'm free to say, I never saw before, and never will see again while I live.

"The exhibition ceased as suddenly as it began. The dwarf stood with arms folded, and a queer, far-away look in his eyes. The Arab gazed at him a moment, and then, tearing the covering from the hilt, held that part of the scimitar close to his face.

"The hilt was of gold, beautifully chased and set with gems. On the end was an immense diamond that blazed in the sunlight

like flame, and this was waved slowly before the dwarf's eyes until the lids dropped and he seemingly slept.

"As the Arab sheathed the sword and replaced the covering on the hilt, he said, 'Ali grows rebellious and objects to serving me; he must be disciplined.' Then, producing a sheet of paper and pencil, he laid them on the stone he had vacated, and, stepping in front of his subject, he gave what seemed to be a command in a loud, imperious tone, and in the same outlandish tongue he had used before.

"In a few moments the dwarf made reply in a muffled voice that sounded as if it came from underground.

"Then, as though interpreting, the Arab said, 'He tells me a great rock closes the entrance to the tunnel leading to the tomb, but he has passed through it.'

"For the next few minutes not a word was spoken. Then came a little cry from the dwarf, followed by a few sentences in a broken, gasping voice, as of one utterly exhausted. At another command, he staggered to the stone, and, seizing the pencil, he rapidly laid off on the paper what looked like the ground plan of a building. A lot of writing followed, and when this was completed the Arab handed me what turned out to be an accurate plan of the tomb and tunnel, with full directions for entering them.

"As Ali finished, he fell over in a dead faint; but a few drops from a vial, which the Arab held to his lips, soon restored him. Then the strange pair mounted and set off towards the oasis, and that was the last I saw of them for some days.

"In the evening I rode back to camp, where I learned that the newcomers had pitched their tents on the outskirts of the oasis, and seemed a quiet, well-disposed lot.

"I told my associates that the sheik had visited me and given me certain directions for finding and entering the tomb, for which, if they proved correct, he was to receive an ordinary mummy, in case any such were found.

"Not until we broke into the tomb and laid profane hands upon its contents, did the sheik put in an appearance at the workings.

"On that momentous day he came, bright and early, accom-

panied by four of his people, big, solemn-looking fellows. Seeking me out, he obtained permission to enter the tomb with me, and while there, no movement of ours, as we opened sarcophagi and took out mummies, jewels, and what not, escaped his watchful eye.

"For a long time there was no sign of the wooden case, but when most of the things had been removed he called attention to a crack in the wall in front of him. A few blows of a pick disclosed a niche, the front of which had been walled up. Within stood upright a covered box, and in this we found, as the Arab foretold, the body of a dwarf. It was that of a man with immensely broad shoulders, and arms reaching nearly to the knees. The face was hideous, and a ferocious smile had drawn the thin lips apart, disclosing teeth sharp, and gleaming like those of a beast.

"Strange to say, the body was not swathed in bandages, as mummies always are, but was clothed in a loose garment of some peculiar stuff that bore our rough handling without a break.

"Great bunches of muscle covered the frame, and nowhere was there an opening or, in fact, any indication that an internal organ had been removed, as is always done in the case of mummies.

"The body, with its stiffened limbs, was like that of one in a cataleptic fit or trance, and represented, as I supposed, some strange and wonderful process of embalming, of which this was the only specimen in existence.

"The head rested on an oblong block, covered with a piece of the same material of which the garment was made, and on this odd pillow the Arab's eyes were fastened with the most intense eagerness. Before I could lay a hand on it, he had replaced the lid of the box, saying as he did so, 'I suppose I may take this now? You have seen how insignificant it is, and I desire to get it to my tent at once.'

"Reluctantly I gave my consent, and his own men carried the case to the surface and placed it in the cart I loaned him to convey his prize to camp.

"An hour or two after they left, we found in the niche, under some rubbish, what I took to be a block of bronze. It was about

twice the size of a common brick, quite heavy, and on every side it was inlaid with gold in strange designs. I sent it up to be put with the other stuff in the storeroom, and shortly afterward was told that the sheik was above, asking to see me privately. When, at my request, he joined me in the tomb, he was greatly excited, and his first words were, 'I have lost a small bronze block belonging to that case; have you seen it about here?'

"'My friend,' I said, 'in return for your services I agreed to give you a certain case and contents. Have I fulfilled my promise?' He replied, 'Yes, but' — 'All bronze blocks,' I put in, 'and everything else, outside the case, belong to me and I shall keep them.'

"At this the sheik said not another word, but, with a murderous scowl on his face, turned and left the pit.

"Upon quitting work for the day, I went to the storeroom and hid the block in a corner, under a pile of tools. Later, when my assistants had gone back to headquarters, and the laborers had settled down for the night, I called in Sam, my African servant, and one of the native laborers, an intelligent, trustworthy Arab, and arranged with them for guarding the storehouse during the night. I was to take the first and longest watch, Sam the next, and the native the last, which would end when the camp was astir in the morning.

"This plan was carried out, and nothing occurred while either myself or Sam was on duty. When the Arab took his post, I examined the building inside and out, but found the block in place and everything in proper condition.

"Upon resuming my bunk, where I had slept like a top through Sam's watch, I found that sleep had deserted me, and for more than an hour I tossed about, unable to close my eyes. At last I dropped off into a doze, from which, a few minutes later, I awoke with a start. Something had disturbed me, I knew not what, but a faint echo seemed to ring in my ears, as of a voice calling for help.

"Jumping up, I made for the storehouse at the top of my speed.

"The moon had not yet gone down, so that objects near by were fairly visible.

"When close to the building, I saw what brought me up standing.

"The door stood wide open, and some one was moving about inside!

"The Arab was nowhere in sight.

"Approaching close to the opening, I called out the man's name. There was no reply, and the noise within ceased.

"As I stood there, peering into the dark room, there was a sudden scrambling, a horrible, snarling cry, and out of the doorway came something on all fours which, leaping past me like a flash, was out of sight almost before I could move.

"Recovering my wits, which, I confess, were scared out of me for the moment, I was inside the room and at the hiding place with a lantern in short order.

"The block was gone!

"A hasty examination showed that nothing else was disturbed, and that the door had been forced by pressure from without; the broken lock, and screws torn from the wood, indicating that extraordinary force had been applied.

"Outside, lying on his back, close to the building, I found the watchman. The poor fellow was dead. His neck was broken, his face distorted with fear and horror, and upon his throat were deep scratches, from which the blood was still flowing.

"Arousing the camp, I had the body taken to the hospital tent, and explained to the men that their comrade had been murdered by a burglar who failed to secure anything of value.

"What it was that did the deed, I could not imagine, but I felt assured that the sheik was the responsible party, and determined to visit him at an early hour.

"Soon after sunrise, I was standing in front of my tent, when, to my surprise, Ali, the dwarf, rode up at a furious gallop. Without dismounting or uttering a word, he thrust into my hand a folded paper and, turning, was off again like a shot. The paper contained these words:—

"'The sheik sleeps, and I have stolen away. He has sworn you shall die as did your guard. If you are brave, come to his tent at midnight with axe and knife. The guards will sleep, and I will help you. The block is —'

"Here the note broke off abruptly, as though the writer had been interrupted, and just what he meant by that reference to the block I'd have given something to know.

"That evening I went back to headquarters with the rest, leaving the storehouse in charge of an assistant and armed guards.

"I believed that Ali's note was written in good faith, and determined to act as he advised, but alone, and without the knowledge of any of my people.

"Shortly before midnight I was in the vicinity of the sheik's tent, which stood near the edge of the oasis, its entrance facing the desert.

"As I cautiously approached the door, the moonlight enabled me to see, stretched on the ground in front of it, the body of a man, his hands clasping a long gun. Already one of Ali's statements was verified. The guard slept, and soundly too, I could see that.

"Just then the sheik's voice rang out in a sort of wild chant, and I prepared for action.

"Securing the broad-bladed hatchet I had brought with me, to my wrist, by means of a leather loop on the handle, and carrying a stout hunting knife in the other hand, I stepped over the sleeper and peered into the tent. A tall screen in front of the door cut off my view completely. Then I crawled through the opening and stood behind the screen. Cutting a slit in this with my knife, I could see that rugs and skins covered the ground, and screens stood at the sides, and at the opposite end of the tent, which was large and oblong in shape. In the center was a table, draped in black, and in front of this, with his back towards me, stood the Arab.

"He wore a black robe that reached from his neck to his heels, and in his right hand was a short, black rod, which waved back and forth in unison with the chant.

"On the table I could see the bronze block, and beside it lay the beautiful scimitar, its hilt glittering in the rays of the lamp that hung from the top of the tent.

"Neither Ali nor the case was in sight, but I felt confident that the dwarf was near, ready to lend a hand, if necessary.

"With weapons ready for instant use, I moved towards the table, and my hand was already on the block before the Arab knew I was there.

"A startled cry fell from his lips as he saw me. His hand flew to the sword, and, quicker than I can tell it, he aimed a blow which, had it reached me, would have split me to the shoulders.

"A leap aside, however, saved me, and before he could straighten himself, I dropped the hatchet and sent in a right-hander that nearly lifted him off his feet. He recovered himself, though, like a born prize-fighter, and, with blood streaming from his nose and mouth, and a hellish fire blazing in his eyes, he sprang at me again.

"But just then a gleam of light flashed by me and I heard a dull, crunching sound. The Arab's rush was suddenly checked. His sword wavered an instant, and then fell to the ground. The hand that held it dropped and closed convulsively upon something that protruded from his breast. It was instantly withdrawn, and with it, the fingers already stiffening around the haft, came a long, broad-bladed knife, dripping with blood. A dark stream followed and flowed over the long robe.

"The Arab swayed to and fro several times; then, with a gurgling, choking cry, he fell to the ground, dead!

"As if in response to the cry, and before I could turn to see where the knife came from, I heard a savage snarl, and something sprang upon me from behind. A pair of long, brown arms were clasped round my neck, and instantly my clothing was being torn to shreds and my flesh gashed by fingers that were more like claws of steel.

"So sudden and fierce was the attack that I staggered forward and would have fallen, had not my assailant's backward tug kept me on my feet.

"My throat seemed to be the point aimed at, and in its mad efforts to reach this, the beast, or whatever it was, soon had my shoulders laid bare and channels dug into my flesh, from which the blood ran in streams.

"I am a powerful man, as you know, Frank, but in the grasp of this fiend I was helpless as a child. Try as I might, I could

not shake him off, and my utmost exertions failed to prevent his inhuman gouging and tearing.

"I had dropped my knife when first attacked, and all I could do was to hold my head down to protect my throat, and make an occasional futile stroke with the hatchet.

"Soon I began to grow weak from loss of blood.

"I wondered vaguely what had become of Ali, and, in a voice scarcely audible, I called upon him for help.

"As I did so, my head went back with a jerk and the sharp claws sank into my throat.

"Death in a frightful form was very close to me when Ali's shout of encouragement reached my ears, and I felt, rather than heard, quick blows falling upon the body of my assailant.

"The pressure on my throat relaxed, the terrible arms dropped from my shoulders, and I was free!

"I fell against the table, gasping for breath, but still conscious that another struggle was going on near me, and that Ali might be needing help, as I had.

"Pulling myself together, I turned to take a hand, when, as I am a living man, Frank, *I found myself gazing upon the mummy we had resurrected!*

"There was no mistaking that stumpy, powerful body, or those features, now distorted with rage, and more horrible than ever.

"Just now it was facing me, making short, savage rushes at Ali, who, knife in hand, eluded the attacks with wonderful agility, driving the blade into the Thing at its every attempt to reach him.

"Stiff with horror and unable to stir, I watched the fight until Ali, in avoiding a vicious rush, slipped and, ere he could recover himself, was in the clutches of the monster.

"With one long arm it hugged the little fellow close to its body, and the free hand was already at his throat before the power to move returned to me.

"Then, staggering forward, I raised the heavy hatchet and, with all the strength in me, I brought it down squarely upon the top of the ugly head.

"I heard the crash and saw the blade eat its way through the skull to the neck,—and then I fainted.

"The next thing I knew, I was lying on a pile of rugs, and Ali

was busy patching me up. So potent were his remedies and treatment that, in a little while, I was on my feet nearly as strong as ever, and feeling only a trifling pain from my injuries.

"'Where is the mummy?' was my first query.

"'I chopped the accursed thing up, and my men are now burning it,' Ali replied.

"'You and I, this night,' he went on, 'rid the world of two monsters. How the sheik put life into the Thing, I know not. He had strange powers. He knew yon tomb existed, and that in it was the body of one who, ages ago, had been a high priest and mighty magician. He knew that with the priest were buried his profoundest secrets — those by which he controlled the elements, and even life itself.

"He knew, moreover, by what dread means the priest had preserved his trance-like existence through all these centuries, and had acquired the formula by which life could be restored to the body.

"'Many of his mysteries he learned through me by various unholy methods, one of which you witnessed; but his prying into things forbidden was hateful to me, and I often refused to aid him, until beaten into submission.

"'The sheik was aware that the priest's secrets were contained in a bronze casket, and this, he believed, was in the case with the body. In the thing under the priest's head he was sure he beheld the object of his search, and when he found this to be nothing but a block of wood, he was mad with rage and disappointment. He knew, then, that the casket must be in your possession, and your refusal to give it to him did not tend to lessen his anger. So furious, indeed, was he, that he beat me cruelly, and swore he would get the casket if he had to kill you all.

"'I then swore I would kill him for beating me.

"'At night the miracle was performed that let loose the evil one, whose first act was to murder your guard and bring back the box.

"'This night he would have opened it and disclosed its mysteries to the sheik, who, once master of them, would have made the other his slave, else taken his life for good.

"'Here is the casket,' continued Ali, handing me what I had

hitherto thought to be a block of bronze; 'take it, but never dream of looking inside. The contents would make one, able to secure and use them, the most powerful of all created beings; but woe to him who would handle them, or even attempt to open the casket, without proper knowledge. This knowledge is now lost forever, and I would bury the unholy thing where none would ever find it, were I not sure it would be safe with you.

"'Take this, also, as a token of my regard and slight return for saving my life,' and he put into my hand the magnificent scimitar, sheathed, and in its snakeskin covering.

"'The sheik,' he went on, ignoring my objections to receiving so valuable a gift, 'claimed to be my father. He lied; but as I am recognized as his son by my tribe, I shall succeed him, and all his possessions are mine.'

"Here I endeavored to force upon him the diamonds left by the sheik as a pledge; but Ali refused them, saying, that as the sheik had broken his agreement, the jewels were rightfully mine.

"As to the death of the sheik, that had been explained, he said, to his people as the result of an attempt of the Arab's to murder me; and having been a cruel task-master, his death caused joy rather than grief.

"Already the body was being prepared for removal, and in a few hours, the boy explained, they would start for home.

"Where that home was, or how reached, however, Ali obstinately refused to tell me, and from the moment when I rode away from the door of his tent, where he stood motionless, watching me until he faded out of sight, I have never seen nor heard from this savior of my life.

"My wounds I had no occasion to exhibit, and so easily accounted for as the result of my fight with the Arab, my version of which was the more readily accepted as that night the strangers disappeared, leaving no trace behind them.

"Thanks to Ali's ointment, my injuries soon healed, and to this day, Frank, you are the only one to whom I have ever told their history.

"Do you wonder at my silence?"

Fragments of an Interrupted Courtship.

BY ANNIE T. ROTTER.

HE ragged pines of old Virginia had hardly settled themselves firmly in the soil of the Confederacy to which the secession of the old fogy State had transplanted them, when, in the shadows of an antiquated library, a young apostle of the new doctrine wrote: —

CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA,
RICHMOND, VA., April 20, 1861.

DR. SCHUYLER VANSITTART.

My Dear Sir: You will observe that (without, believe me, a tremor or the straining of a single heart tendon) I have changed my nationality and my country. Instead of the "stars and stripes," the "stars and bars" float to the breeze (excuse extreme originality of expression), and our brand new ship of State dares, alone, the storms of war. You and I may never meet again — nothing would induce me to marry a horrid Yankee,— so try to forget me, as the very remembrance of you is ignored. With three cheers for Dixie,

Yours in oblivion,

ELIZABETH PONSONBY.

The rosewood cabinet desk of old-fashioned make sustained, without doubt, a terrific shock at being made the innocent accessory to so dynamitical an epistle; in its long life nothing so shocking had ever been penned upon the placid surface of its patient writing shelf. The prim little notes of its long-buried former owners had never overstepped the lightest bounds of severe decorum. No pen had ever before shaken in belligerent dips the trembling ink-stand that stood open mouthed, aghast, at such indecorous words. The poor old dignified penholder, carved from one of Washington's walking sticks, made no effort to understand the new-fangled lines that its nib so viciously scratched over the paper. "Southern Confederacy," indeed! It had never heard of such a thing from the quaint, low-voiced belles who had so laboriously spelled out their stiff little letters to the originals

of the faded pictures, whose faces looked rigid enough, certainly, to put out of countenance a loaded bombshell.

"There," exclaimed the young lady, whose energetic pressure of the seal shook the ancient rheumatic legs of the entire epistolary establishment, "that settles *that!*"

"Oh, no," creaked and rattled the rusty lock, "your grandmother's eyes didn't flash like that; dear me, no, nor your great-aunt's either; not even when the major marched off to Lake Erie (that's his picture over the fireplace), even though, poor man, he never marched back again. Hoity, hoity, what are we coming to in these dismal new times?"

Quite in the spirit of a cavalry charge, to overwhelm the enemy in a first attack, was dashed off this communication — so startling to the old desk — with its astounding title headings, intensely savage sentiments, and ninety degree Fahrenheit patriotism. Back came the answer to the young protestant, whose only cause for affront lay in the unfortunate geographical position of her correspondent's home: "Love knows neither creed nor country, and, although a less conspicuous title would have been more to my taste, yet — we shall meet again."

War opened, hostile armies confronted each other between Richmond and the Potomac; Mason and Dixon's line was accentuated by fixed bayonets and enforced by the booming of cannon; sword thrusts gave point to geographical boundaries, while the long roll of the drum warned off all intruders.

Letters flew North from the blue uniforms on the Potomac, and travelled South from the gray coats at Manassas, but never crossed, save by flag of truce, the sharp wall made by picketed muskets. Terrible orders from irascible old generals, who had outgrown romance and outlived sentiment, sternly directed all letters to be read before passing under the white folds of these same peaceful banners. So every word was weighed, and dictionaries became the popular literature of the day to those that wrote to "the other side," in order that a phrase might be found capable of expressing everything to some particular person, but betraying nothing to the flag-of-truce-letter-reading department. No one must suspect that the loving inquiries about Aunt Jane's neuralgia, or the intense anxiety concerning Uncle John's rheumatism meant an

altogether different query to those that wrote so guardedly. So personals in the leading newspapers, North and South, were resorted to, and many a line held a bleeding heart, while a single word often carried joy to an entire household, or that most awful of all personals, initials and a date, followed by the one word "killed," embodied too frequently the history of a broken life. But no such tragic announcements were for Elizabeth. A calm, dignified, eminently proper personal in the H —

> SCHUYLER hopes little sister's fever is abating. Grandpa sends love. Richmond E—— please copy.

was all. Back by rapid transit traveled the answer (he could almost see the nervous fingers fly over the paper) : —

> ELIZABETH no better. Grandma never liked blue. H—— please copy.

. . . . . .

One dismal morning Mrs. Ponsonby was sewing diligently on a soldier's haversack, one of an immense pile, in such haste to finish her task that she wasted no time in fastening stitches or in strengthening straps. Thus, without the eye of a prophet, one might see, in future weary marches, many a poor fellow's scanty rations slipping through the gaps in this same haversack made by fingers more enthusiastic in effort than proficient in accomplishment, and hear, instead of the blessings the old lady expected to be poured on her industrious hands and self-sacrificing heart, the echo of an assortment of ejaculations, made possible only by Confederate whiskey, flung at the careless fingers of the maker.

"Mighty po'-lookin' sojer want to see you, Mis' Clementine," said efficient though ungrammatical Judy, nodding her turbanned head to Mrs. Ponsonby through a diminutive opening in the door. "Say he ain' horngry, 'cause I dun as' him dat fus' thing; look monsus poly, do' fus' sojer I see in a mont' o' moons whar ain' horngry."

"On the nineteenth of May," said the limping wearer of a ragged gray coat, as he stood in Mrs. Ponsonby's presence, with the crown of a hat surrounded by a broken halo of brim in his hand, "our regiment held a position on the right of the 10th Alabama, the attacking force. Behind an old house, set at just the

right angle, as it seemed to us, to hide an ambuscade, a party of sharpshooters was carefully and all too accurately picking off our men. Suddenly an aim was unerringly taken — our flag trembled and fell — "

And so it went on, the familiar but ever moving tale of a flag-bearer killed, a soldier — the narrator of the story — springing to the rescue of his standard, himself to be laid senseless by a bullet. From this oblivion he had been wakened from a drenching cold waterbath to hear the verdict, "Poor fellow; leg badly shattered!" pronounced over him by a voice with a slight nasal twang. A voice, it chanced, that he was destined to hear daily during his tedious illness, for the man who had picked him up on the field was also the assistant in the hospital, and quite a friendship grew up between the young doctor and his patient, through their many conversations. So it was that on the day of the narrator's discharge, the surgeon, along with congratulations on the other's recovery and approaching exchange, gave a confidence and asked a favor, as he said, "while your ardor is yet at white heat.

"Three years ago," the doctor continued, "before this hateful war was ever dreamed of, and while I was a student in Philadelphia, I became acquainted with a young lady from Richmond. The circumstances were romantic — well, never mind them — it's a long story — Tell you some other time, perhaps," he added dubiously, "five years after a treaty of peace, as the Confederate bills say.

"Well, without going through the various stages of the affair, from rapture to despair, and from despair back, through faint glimmerings of hope, to ecstasy again, the decision was finally reached that we were, well, after a fashion, engaged; quite, I assure you, on the order of poor Harry and the well-nigh forgotten Flora of Madison Square fame. Just then, with abominable inopportuneness, I felt, Mr. Lincoln asked Virginia (mind you, when the day was, after many delays, actually fixed) for her quota of troops. Poor old Virginia had, with her usual deliberateness, been slow to move, but this call moved her — out of the Union — leaving me, as Miss Elizabeth thought, on the wrong side.

"One day, it must have been by the last through mail, I received a most astounding letter from the young lady herself;

terrific headings, shocking sentiments, 'Southern Confederacy,' and all the rest of it. Quite a doubling up of fists all 'round, a regular 'one-Southerner-can-whip-five-Yankees' epistle. *She* said 'ending everything.' *I* said 'Never,' with a capital N. Well, to come to the pith of the affair, we hear through personals of each other,— awfully cut and dried way of writing love letters though, you know; so I ask you, as man to man, to get a letter to Elizabeth from me. Of course you can't carry a written communication. I don't care to treat the camp to a specimen of my ability as a military Romeo, so I am going to read you the epistle which you, once safe in Richmond after your exchange, are to write out in my name and hand to her in person. Now will you do this, without altering jot or tittle, except to throw into it all the fervor you can convey on paper; and will you remember that under no circumstances are you to give this precious document into any hands save those of the terrible little rebel who wrote the wonderful letter of 1861; or, if impossible to see her, then into those of her mother?"

To that question the letter now passed from the hands of the "raggedy man" to the feminine fingers that dropped the unfinished haversack to receive it, was the silent and sufficient answer.

. . . . . .

The smoke still lingered over the smoldering chimneys of Richmond when Judy, ignorant of the interstate episode in her mistress's love affairs, entered one morning to announce a visitor.

"Gemman in de parlor, Mis' 'Lizbeth, an' clar to goodness, you'll hev' to 'scuse me, but he mos' sholy do look powerful like one o' dem Yankees whar cum in wid de Union."

And after the end at Appomattox, when the guns were stacked for all time by the tired hands of the starved men who wept as they laid them aside, Surgeon Vansittart and Elizabeth — But what need to go over the old story? Patriotic fervor gave place to cosmopolitan love — was it ever otherwise? Cupid is blind, so gray and blue are alike to him. And ought we not to dwell together in "love and peace"?

The Celestial Adventure of Sin Loo.

BY RICHARD STILLMAN POWELL.

SIN LOO paused again beneath a lamp post and again examined the slip of paper held in his hand. On it was written an address. To that address Sin Loo had been traveling for over an hour; for the contents of the twin baskets hanging from the ends of the pole across his shoulder were being impatiently awaited by the person who had penned the directions. A dozen times had Loo held the paper forth to passers-by and softly asked, "Wha-lat?" And not once had assistance been denied. Some, captivated by Loo's artless and helpless countenance, had even walked to the nearest corner and from there indicated the right direction. Already, had he but known it, Loo had passed the house he was seeking a half dozen times, for, since a half hour ago, he had been breathlessly hurrying around the same block. And now he studied the slip of paper again with perplexed eyes. But to him it was only a series of faint black scratches, sadly deficient in symmetry and sense, when judged by his idea of what correct writing should be.

For Sin Loo was not a low-born Chinaman; a fact indicated by the silken texture of his blouse that shimmered faintly in the light, by the neatness of his two little cloth slippers, and by the cleanliness of the slim hand that held the address. Sin Loo sighed, shook his head despondently, and, clutching the bit of paper tightly, looked about him in bewilderment and alarm.

It was very dark; the long sidewalks were practically deserted, and the scurrying cabs and carriages with the blazing lights suggested to Sin Loo the passing of so many fiery-orbed dragons, of the kind impressed upon his memory by his grandmother's fairy tales, told years before under the twilight of Canton skies.

Presently, as he hurried on, his eyes caught sight of a figure in the distance, and on the moment he was fleeing down the avenue

as though the evil one himself were upon his heels. For a whole block he fled, the baskets swaying and bobbing about him as though suddenly invested with life. Then he paused and glanced fearfully back, and a long-drawn sigh of relief escaped him; the blue-coated demon was no longer in sight.

Sin Loo, during his brief residence amongst them, had learned to look upon policemen as the incarnation of all evil, and to fly from them as he would have flown from the Purple Ogres of his grandmother's tales.

Out of all reckoning now, Sin Loo held forth his precious slip of paper and looked about for assistance. But no one was to be seen until, presently, his troubled gaze, searching the dim street, encountered a wonderful sight. At a little distance a canopy of striped cloth reached from a residence into the street, and from under it shone a radiant blaze of light. Sin Loo was but eighteen, and curiosity seized upon him. Cautiously he moved forward. A throng of people barred the way, and Sin Loo crept into the shadow of the group. From there he could see a strip of beautiful crimson carpet running from the street across the sidewalk, up a flight of high, broad steps, and through a portal luminous with golden light, from whence issued forth the subdued strains of what seemed celestial music. Surely, thought Sin Loo, here lived the blessed gods!

Wondering curiosity got the upper hand of fear, and Sin Loo began to worm his way forward through the crowd. But the swinging baskets seriously retarded progress until the onlookers, becoming aware of his presence, opened up a path for him with cries of, "Here's another of 'em! Make way there for Li Hung Chang!" and Sin Loo, smiling timidly upon all, advanced until the beautiful crimson carpet lay at his feet. He stretched forth one little slipper until it rested caressingly upon the edge of the carpet, and then heaved a sigh of ecstasy. The carpet was for all the world like the soft down on the breasts of the white ducks that his grandfather raised on the Choo-Kiang!

Suddenly Loo darted back with a cry of absolute terror. There was a great noise, the people behind pressed forward, a carriage with the fiercest of eyes stopped, with a clanking of chains, before the awning; two resplendent beings in red and blue livery darted

forward and swung open the door; and an angel — two angels — in white, stepped out. But it was not the carriage that had frightened Sin Loo. Nay; but there, not two steps away, terrible, demoniac, stood a huge Blue-Coated One, waving a huge stick toward Sin Loo! With a yell of agony Sin Loo strove to retreat. But no, the crowd held him. There was but one way open. His profane feet trod the carpet of the gods, and with three bounds he stood in the portal of Paradise!

Struck with the danger of his predicament, Sin Loo glanced fearfully back, only to meet the eyes of the Blue-Coated One who barred the way. He was laughing loudly with the rest of the throng, but to Sin Loo he appeared to be gnashing his teeth with disappointment over the escape of his prey. To remain there was to be lost. Sin Loo gazed about him, and for a moment was lost in awe and admiration of his surroundings. Near at hand, lined by flowering shrubs and waving palms, rose a great staircase, winding slowly upward to be lost in another flood of light from above. About him were blazing lights, banks of brilliant blossoms, graceful festoons of swaying vines; in his nostrils what seemed the odors of a thousand plum gardens, and in his ears such music as they had never heard. A burst of laughter aroused him. Down the great staircase, holding their brilliant draperies about them, came a group of goddesses. In desperation Sin Loo darted to a great curtain, whose soft folds shed a dozen hues under the light. Behind this he would hide. He lifted a corner, when, as though by magic means, the curtain was whisked from his grasp, and before him, dazzling in jewels and radiant apparel, with hand outstretched, stood, — ah, yes, it could be the queen of the goddesses, no less, in wait to rebuke his presumption.

With quaking heart, Sin Loo turned to flee. But lo! the entrance was gone from sight. Behind him stood sentinel two huge ogres in shining armor, and clasping great glittering blades, the sight of which sent thrills of terror coursing through the marrow of Loo's trembling bones. Before him stood, sat, or walked a multitude of gods. He closed his eyes and awaited annihilation. Presently he opened them again, and found himself still alive. Then he sought to escape in the throng, flattening himself and his awkward burdens against the nearest flower-screened wall,

and hiding behind the great marble pillars and the tall palms. But he could not avoid notice; murmured comment greeted his stealthy progress, and the eyes of gods and goddesses followed him. Then the music began again, and in a moment the great gold and white hall was a wonderful kaleidoscope, for the inhabitants of Paradise in their gorgeous dresses, with their flashing gems and waving plumes, were dancing together. Sin Loo, forgetting his terror for the moment, peeped from behind a tall and feathery fern, and thought that never had his most magnificent dreams pictured Paradise one thousandth part as wonderful as it was. Before him two gods, one in a mass of pale blue silk and creamy lace, the other clad in russet leather, slashed here and there to show a lining of crimson satin, were talking together. Sin Loo listened with might and main, but the words were strange and not to be understood.

"Magnificent sight, isn't it?" the one in blue was saying in languid tones. "Ought to be, though, since they've been over six months in preparing for it. I hear there were over a thousand invitations sent out."

"Yes," replied the other. "By the way, have you seen Jack Vandergrift and his wife?"

"Can't say; probably wouldn't have known them if I had."

"Yes, you would, though. Mrs. Jack's been getting ready for this affair for months and months. Told me the other day that she had secured the finest rig-out of them all. Seems that she went to the high Mogul, or whatever you call him, of a Chinese acting troop that's playing in Chinatown, and engaged costumes for herself and Jack. She's to be a celestial princess or something, and Jack's to be an emperor. Had to deposit a cool thousand apiece for the costumes, don't you know. Can't understand what's keeping them."

"I saw a Chinaman awhile ago carrying a couple of baskets slung over his shoulder like those the vegetable carriers use in California, only smaller. Fine get-up, but didn't look *much* like an emperor."

"Yes, saw him myself. Everybody's speaking of him. Never saw a finer Chinaman make-up in my life. Acts his part, too. I say if you see Jack or his wife, let me know. Engaged to her for supper."

"Won't do you any good. We're to be paired off, helter-skelter, by our hostess with a view to artistic effect, and marched into supper like a double file of convicts. Look, I believe the hour of doom approaches. Come on!"

The pair hurried away, and Sin Loo now noticed that both music and dancing had ceased and that all Paradise was flocking to the far end of the hall. To be alone was more terrifying than to be amidst the crowd; in Loo's case safety lay in numbers; and with his baskets flopping to and fro he scuttled down the room, a ludicrous little figure, slipping and sliding on the waxed surface of the ball-room floor like a duck on ice.

The queen of the goddesses, assisted by lesser deities, was going and coming amongst the crowd, forming it couple by couple into line of march. Here Richelieu was giggling with a nineteenth century milk maid; there one of his Swiss guard was whispering soft nothings into the pink ear of a Highland lass; yonder, a black-garbed and black-masked executioner leaned on his broad-ax and joked with a pretty Parisian cyclienne. Soldiers and peasants, kings and queens, lords and ladies, favorites of mythology and celebrities of nursery rhyme, were all here, waiting for the orchestra hidden in the balcony above to strike up the martial air. Already the hostess had raised her fan, when suddenly her gaze sweeping about the hall caught sight of a skulking blue-clad figure. She advanced and seized Sin Loo by the sleeve.

"This way, please;" and Loo, his knees knocking together with fright, was led to the rear of the line.

"You will take me in, please," said the hostess. Again she lifted her fan and again lowered it without making the expected signal, for across the floor from the entrance hurried a lady in simple evening costume, a black vizard held before her eyes, while at the alcoved doorway, his entrance impeded for a moment by the two knights-at-arms who raised gleaming blades to bar his progress, a man in conventional broadcloth and linen paused with a look of serio-comic helplessness.

"It was our costumes!" exclaimed the lady with the vizard, breathlessly, between her hostess' expressions of pleasure and playful reprimand. "They never came, and as we couldn't miss this, here we are at the eleventh hour, plain nobodies!

"What was the trouble? I don't know. I only know they were incomparable. I engaged them last week, and they were to be delivered this evening. Ko Ha, the Chinese actor —

"Gracious! What's that?"

Sin Loo, groveling on his knees, was begging for mercy in high-pitched, terror-filled vowels. He had heard his master's name and knew that the time of reckoning had come at last. Mrs. Jack sprang forward.

"I really believe — it *is* Ko Ha's valet! Where — "

But there was no need of asking. Sin Loo's bundle lay beside him, and from an overturned basket — one of the properties of the Chinese theater — flowed a dazzling stream of gold-embroidered silks and satins.

"My costume!" cried Mrs. Jack.

"And mine!" cried her husband, as, laughing, he drew the treasures from the other basket.

"You — you wretch!" cried Mrs. Jack. "Where have you been? How came you here? Why — "

But Sin Loo was deaf to all questioning. In his shrill treble he was gabbling monotonously forth all the prayers ever taught him by his beloved grandmother.

Then the orchestra played an extra waltz; Mr. and Mrs. Jack Vandergrift hurried away to don their costumes; and Sin Loo, still clutching the slip of paper tightly in his hand, was conducted through the great portal, down the beautiful crimson carpet, and so forth from the presence of the outraged gods.

The throng on the sidewalk was gone. Only the Blue-Coated One remained. With a startled cry Sin Loo looked once, and then fled into the darkness. And, strange to tell, the demon only grinned!

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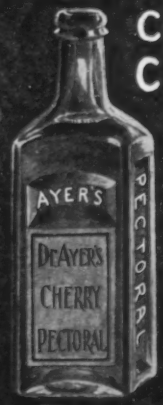

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